

“THE POTTER’S WHEEL”

Text: Jeremiah 18:1-6

Subject: How there is hope for everyone (to be changed by the power of God).

Question: How many of you believe it is God’s will that we keep on changing, growing and conforming into the image of Jesus?

Question: How many of you believe that God’s power can change anybody of anything that needs to be changed?

(Remember II Corinthians 3:18)

“But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory (or degree to degree), even as by the Spirit of the Lord.”

(Notice two things here)

1. “We **all** with open face” (“**all**” means you are included)
2. “Are **changed**” means God has plans for your transformation.

Question: Does the potter ever give up on the clay?

Question: What about my flaws that need changing?

Question: How does the potter form and change the clay?

Question: Why do I get so down on myself?

Question: And how does Jeremiah 18 speak to my life today?

Introduction

1. Jeremiah is known as “the weeping prophet”.
2. He was born in 646 B.C. and grew up in Anathoth.
3. He ministered during the final years of Judah’s history (from 626-580 B.C.)
4. He prophesied of Judah’s destruction, but also announced that Judah would be restored through the coming Messiah.
5. He faithfully warned of Babylon’s victory, but Judah refused to accept his warnings.
6. His purpose was to warn Judah that her sins would result in chastisement from the North. (The Babylonians)
7. His ministry appeared totally unsuccessful as the nation declined until Judah was taken captive by Babylon (in 586 B.C.)
8. His life was not easy as he confronted kings, false prophets and hypocritical priests.
9. Failure seems to be his reward as three great events shook against his ministry.
 - ◆ The city of Jerusalem was invaded!
 - ◆ The temple was destroyed!
 - ◆ The Jews were taken captive!

Yet God had an encouraging word:

All read Jeremiah 1:5-12

- ◆ (In v. 5) – God knew you before you were born.
- ◆ (In v. 5) – God has a good plan for your life.
- ◆ (In v. 8) – God will walk with you in the journey.
- ◆ (In v. 9) – God will touch you as an individual.

But most of all (in v. 11 & 12)

◆ God will fulfill the promise of the “almond tree” What’s the almond tree?

1. God showed Jeremiah an almond tree one winter day in Anathoth in 626 B.C.
2. God knew that Jeremiah was discouraged, because spiritually things were dark and dismal.
3. The Hebrew word for “almond tree” is (SAGED).
4. It’s a word that means “the worker” or “the watcher”.
5. It was given this name because the almond tree was the first to bloom in the spring.
6. It was a sign of nature that spring was just around the corner, and
7. It was a sign to Jeremiah, to you and to me as well.

(What’s the application?)

1. That God is working and watching over you (and)
2. That God will see to it that a spiritual spring will soon arrive to those who are faithful!

(v. 12) “I will hasten My word to perform it.”

Question: Will it all be easy in the meantime?

Question: Will there be difficulty and testing along the way?

Question: Did Jeremiah have to plow through some things as God was changing him?

Question: Did he find himself on the Potter’s Wheel of life with pressure, pain and perplexing days?

(His resume is listed in scripture)

1. He preached and preached yet saw no visible results in his ministry.
2. He was threatened with death if he continued to preach.
3. He was rejected by the very ones he was serving.
4. He was verbally abused and slandered.
5. He was devastated in Jeremiah 36:23 when the king ordered his work (the scroll) to be tossed into the fire.
6. He was cast into the dungeon and sunk in the mire and mud. (v. 38:6)
7. He cursed the day he was born and was consumed with sorrow. (v. 20:14)

(Yet in the midst of it all)

Jeremiah discovered something and wrote about it. (In Lamentations 3)

1. “**Great is thy faithfulness.**” (Greater than every obstacle.)
2. “**His compassions fail not.**” (Even when you cannot see Him).
3. “**They are new every morning.**” (God is worthy to be trusted from one day to the next.)

(And in the midst of one ordinary day)

Jeremiah 18 transpires and unfolds:

- ◆ In the midst of a turbulent culture and society, Jeremiah is prompted to take a journey.
- ◆ “Leave the temple, the city and go out to the valley of Hinnom.”
- ◆ “Go down to the potter’s house, I want to show you something.”
- ◆ “Open your eyes, open your ears, hear with your heart; I have a message just for you.”

**What is it that Jeremiah sees?
(Three things that minister to us all)**

I. Jeremiah Sees The Making Of The Vessel (v. 1-3)

(v. 3) *"Then I went down to the potter's house and behold, he wrought a work on the wheels."*

(Oh, what a picture.)

1. Manufacturing of pottery was a major industry in Jeremiah's day.
2. Jeremiah had seen the potter's house many times.
3. On this day, God gives a special message to Jeremiah, Israel and to you and me.

(Look at the picture Jeremiah sees.)

1. The potter sits between two stone wheels that are joined by a shaft.
2. He turns the bottom wheel with his feet.
3. He works the clay on the top wheel as the wheel turns.
4. Jeremiah sees the clay resisting the potter's hands, he sees the vessel (ruined from resisting) yet the potter makes another vessel.

(What's the application?)

Real simple

- ◆ As the potter has power over the clay, so God has power over you and me.
- ◆ God doesn't ask for our advice; our responsibility is simply to yield to the will of God.

(The application is painted in v. 7-17)

1. If Judah is threatened with judgment and repents, then God will relent and withhold His judgment.
2. If God promises blessing and Judah does evil, then God withholds His blessing and Judah loses out with God.

The facts are:

Fact: Judah was rejecting the law of God.

Fact: Judah chose idols contrary to God.

Fact: Judah abandoned the standards God placed before them.

Fact: Judah was resisting the hands of the potter.

(How does this apply to you and me?)

- ◆ The nation was made up of individuals like you and me.
- ◆ And you and I have the ability to yield to or resist the hands of the potter.
- ◆ The good news is the potter of your life knows what He is doing in your life.

(For instance)

1. The Potter has a **choice**.
He can leave the clay alone untouched, or make out of it a vessel of beauty.
 - ◆ So the Lord could leave us alone and untouched or make us a vessel of honor.
 - ◆ He does not have to put His hand on you, but aren't you glad He has?
2. The Potter has **tools**.

He uses the wheel to spin, his hands to press, sharp instruments to slice away rough edges.

- ◆ So the Lord allows you to be pressured on one side and then another in ways you cannot understand.
- ◆ But God is steadily working out his purpose in you. His tools are the Word, the Holy Spirit, your circumstances and other people.

3. The Potter has **wisdom**.

He has a wise purpose in mind for every vessel on the wheel.

- ◆ So the Lord has a unique purpose for your life and mine, to form our character into the likeness of Jesus.
- ◆ The wisdom of God is working behind the visible scenes of your life.

4. The Potter has **patience**.

He takes his time, spins the wheel, ever patient in forming each individual vessel.

- ◆ So the Lord is ever patient with us, always changing us, but never discarding us along the way.
- ◆ We can frustrate his purpose, but in mercy He doesn't give us what we deserve.

(v. 3 says)

"Then I went down to the potter's house, and behold He wrought a work on the wheels."

(2 Revelations)

1. The world wrought in Hebrew (AWSAW) means:

- ◆ To fashion ◆ To observe ◆ To trim ◆ To govern ◆ To advance
- ◆ To prepare ◆ To hold ◆ To keep ◆ To accomplish ◆ To finish

2. The word wheels is plural, why?

- ◆ The potter had one foot on the wheel near the ground.
- ◆ The potter had his hands near the other wheel holding the vessel.

(Both wheels are at work in you.)

- ◆ There is the earthly (**lower wheel**) that is all we can see down here.
- ◆ But there is the Heavenly (**higher wheel**) that the Father sees and understand.

(II Corinthians 4:17, 18)

"For our light affliction which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." (v. 17)

"While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal." (v. 18)

II. Jeremiah Sees the Marring Of The Vessel (v. 4)

"And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter; so he made it again another vessel as seemed good to the potter to make it."

Question: Why was the clay marred on the wheel?

Question: What was the matter with the clay?

Question: Why didn't the potter throw it away?

(The marring is listed)

(v. 8) *"If the nation turns from their evil."*

(v. 10) *"If Israel does evil in my sight and doesn't obey my voice."*

(v. 11) *"Return ye now everyone from his evil way."*

(v. 15) *"Because my people have forgotten me and wandered off the ancient paths."*

(In plain vanilla)

1. Judah (God's people) were resisting the will of God.
2. Judah was rejecting God's call to repentance.
3. Judah was dating the world and flirting with sin.
4. Judah was worshiping idols and living for vain things.
5. Judah was refusing to submit and be changed by God.

(So much so was their frustration that she says this)
(v. 12) "There is no hope." (The moaning of the vessel)

(Why such despair?)

1. Because sin had become a habitual way of life.
2. Because sin had acquired such a strong influence.
3. Because sin had manifested a willful disobedience.
4. Because sin had gained an unrestrained license.

(And despair had set in)

(v. 12) *"They said there is no hope, so we'll just have to walk after our own devices."*

(In other words) "Since our sin has been so bad for so long, we may as well just give up."

(But wait a minute)

Question: Did God give up on His people?

Answer: (v. 4) *"The vessel that God made was marred."*

(Then what?)

◆ Did He throw it away? Cast it aside? Say "Just forget it"?

(v. 4 says: "He made it again.")

You think...

- ◆ "I've been marred too long."
- ◆ "I've sinned too long."
- ◆ "I've tried to change too long."
- ◆ "I can't quit my bad habits."
- ◆ "I've promised God before and failed."
- ◆ "I'm struggling with bothering God again"

(v. 7 & 8- Two awesome revelations)

1. (v 7) *"At what instant I shall speak"* means; "if at any time" we will turn to God.

2. (v. 8) God says ***“I will repent of the consequences I thought to do.”*** (And exercise **grace and power and deliver you from sin.**)

Question: Do we really serve a (v. 4) “He made it again God”?

Question: Is God really a God of the second chance?

(Remember saint and sinner)

1. Like the patient potter **God will mold you again!**
2. Like the clay on the wheel, life is a series of **new beginnings.**
3. Like Moses, David, Jonah and Peter, **no failure is final** when God comes in the picture.

(If you are saved and on the Potter’s Wheel)

Remember:

- ◆ God is removing the grit and base materials that will crack the vessel in the fire.
- ◆ God is preparing you on the wheel, so you can take it in the fire.
- ◆ And, lest you be deceived or despairing, remember the kiln or furnace secrets:

(Four Furnace Secrets)

1. Clay in the furnace requires just the right **preparation.**
(God is preparing you today for service tomorrow.)
2. Clay in the furnace requires just the right **oven.**
(Not just any oven will do, God has you right where you belong.)
3. Clay in the furnace requires just the right **heat.**
(If it’s too cold, the clay won’t get hard; if it’s too hot, the clay can be destroyed.)
4. Clay in the furnace requires just the right **timing.**
(The potter knows exactly when to take the vessel from the heat.)
 - ◆ If change is not important to you.
 - ◆ If transformation into the holiness of Christ is not a big deal in your mind.
 - ◆ If somehow you feel safe in a crowd,

(Then remember)

- ◆ Vessels were placed in the furnace so that **not one single clay pot could touch another.**

(Why not?)

- ◆ Because if any two vessels fused together in the fire, **both would be spoiled and ruined.**

(In other words)

- ◆ It’s not the church congregation God is dealing with as a **group.**
- ◆ **It’s me alone** that God is dealing with.
- ◆ **It’s you alone** that God is making on the wheel.
- ◆ **It’s you and me** (one on one) that God is specifically forming for His glory!!!

(Notice v. 10 - “I would benefit them.”)

◆ The word “benefit” means:

1. To make well
3. To make sound
5. To make cheerful
7. To dress up
2. To make sure
4. To make content
6. To make beautiful

◆ This is what God does for the person who yields (and doesn’t resist) the potter.

III. Jeremiah Sees The Message Of The Vessel (v. 5–12)

Question: What’s the message from Jeremiah 18 to your heart today?

1. **Be encouraged!** For God is using all of your circumstances on the wheel to press you into a vessel of honor.
2. **Be encouraged!** For God hasn’t given up on you and will start over again; He’ll give you a new beginning.
3. **Be encouraged!** For God has the ability to extract, add to, and change anything in your life that needs to be changed.
4. **Be encouraged!** That God is waiting for your response to His invitation to surrender and yield to the Master Potter who does all things well!!!

Conclusion

- ◆ God approves of new beginnings and fresh starts!
- ◆ God excels in starting over again!
- ◆ God delights in putting you on the wheel again! **(Why?)**
- ◆ Because He sees the finished product!

Amen!
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